

## EXTERNAL MESSAGE PASSING METHOD AND APPARATUS

## ABSTRACT OF DISCLOSURE

An apparatus which uses channel counters in combination with  
5 channel count read instructions as a means of providing information  
that data in a given channel is valid or has not been previously  
read. The counter may also, in the situation of the channel being  
defined as blocking, be used to prevent the unintentional  
overwriting of data in a register used by the channel or,  
10 alternatively, prevent further communications with the device  
assigned to that channel when a given count occurs. Intelligent  
external devices may also use channel count read instructions sent  
to the counting mechanism for reading from and writing to the  
channel.